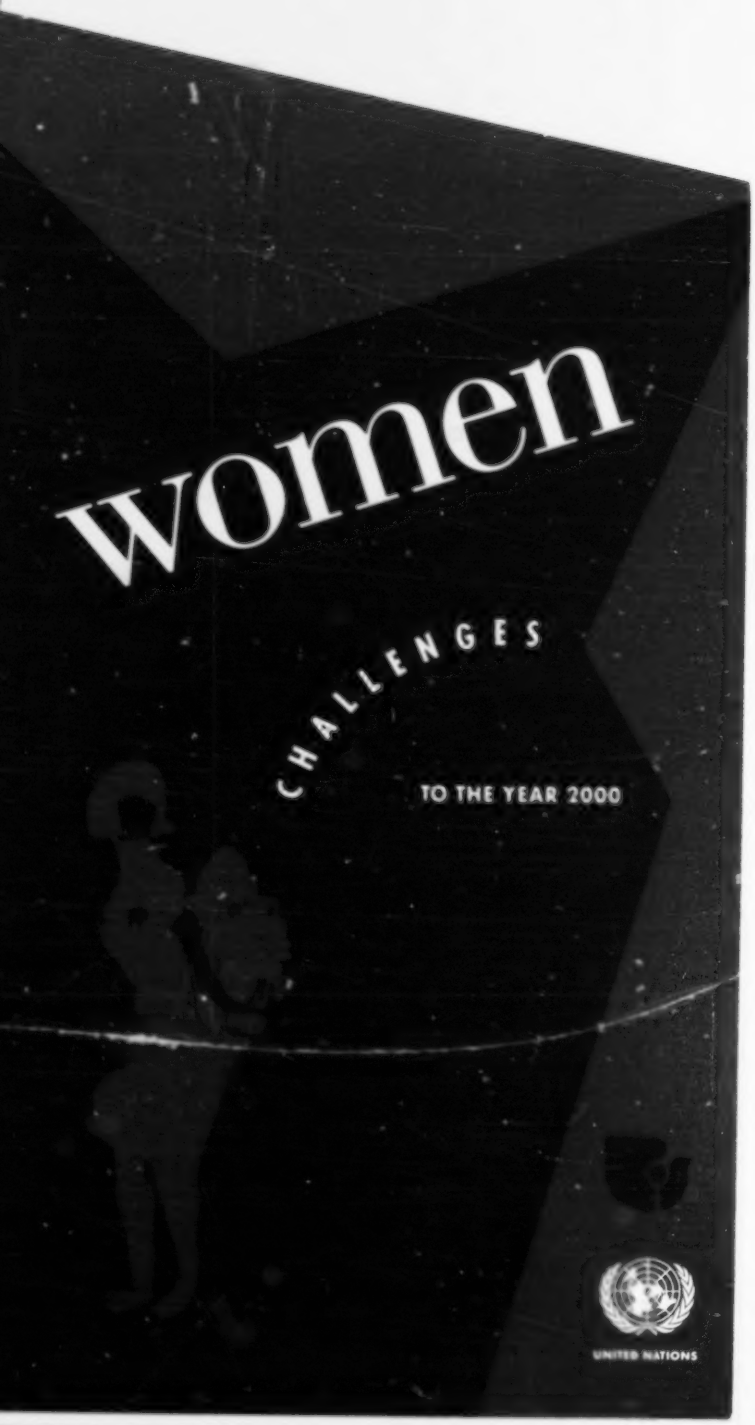
women
CHALLENGES
TO THE YEAR 2000
UNITED NATIONS

LEGAL CHALLENGES

. . . TO THE YEAR 2000

The United Nations is in the vanguard of efforts to end gender discrimination and establish equality between men and women the world over.

However, progress has been slow and many obstacles remain, hindering realization of the objectives expressed in the United Nations' two milestone documents concerned with women's rights: the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the 1985 Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women.

The global outlook for women is adversely affected by such factors as continued population increase, the risk of AIDS, pervasive female illiteracy, violence at home, in the workplace and in society, the prolonged international debt crisis, and the increasing number of refugees and displaced persons, most of whom are women and their children. Even though there has been some progress in the area of legal equality, actual equality remains elusive.

As we approach the year 2000, many challenges remain: legal, health, education, economic, political and peace challenges. The following list is excerpted from the United Nations publication Women: Challenges to the Year 2000 (DPI/1134 in English, French and Spanish). For further information on how to obtain this book, please contact:

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- **Increase awareness among men and women of women's rights under international conventions and national laws**
- **Strengthen national machineries for the advancement of women**
- **Achieve ratification by all countries of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**
- **Ensure equal rights for women under national laws**
- **Guarantee enforcement of laws safeguarding women's equality; introduce affirmative action incentives and penalties for non-adherence**
- **Abolish all forms of slavery and prostitution of women**
- **Establish a legal minimum age for marriage and ensure the mutual consent of both parties, as well as the woman's right to retain her own nationality**
- **Guarantee the right of all women independently to buy, sell, own, inherit and administer property and other resources**
- **Provide legal protection of women's equal access to land ownership, credit, training, investment and income**
- **Establish national machinery in all countries to implement and monitor progress towards women's equality and to provide a mechanism for redress of grievances**

HEALTH CHALLENGES TO THE YEAR 2000

- Improve women's and girls' health by ensuring them access to adequate maternal health care, family planning and nutrition
- Increase national health budgets to allow for free primary health care, maintenance and improvement of existing health facilities, improved clean water and sanitation facilities and subsidized prescribed medications
- Earmark national funds for research and provision of family planning devices
- Ensure access to family planning and the right of each woman to decide on the number and spacing of her children; actively discourage child-bearing at too early an age
- Reduce maternal mortality through provision of adequate pre- and post-natal health care, including nutrition for pregnant women and lactating mothers
- Campaign for equal sharing of domestic responsibilities between men and women
- Protect women's equal access to health services, especially for female children, the disabled and elderly women
- Increase life expectancy for women to at least 65 years in all countries
- Introduce a global immunization against the six major communicable diseases of childhood: tuberculosis, diphtheria, poliomyelitis, measles, tetanus and whooping cough
- Impose severe penalties for pre- and post-natal female infanticide
- Eliminate the traditional practice of female circumcision
- Guarantee access to protective measures against contraction of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases; provide counselling and support services for AIDS victims and their families

EDUCATION CHALLENGES TO THE YEAR 2000

- **Make a concentrated world-wide effort to end illiteracy among females by the year 2000**
- **Create incentives aimed at achieving equal literacy rates for males and females; measure progress towards the goal of universal literacy and numeracy by the year 2000**
- **Intensify efforts towards universal primary education during the 1990s by making education a priority concern**
- **Revise all textbooks to eliminate sex stereotyping and to include the contributions of women to civilization**
- **Improve secondary education for girls, especially in rural areas, by introducing double-shift or single-sex schools in regions where gender segregation discourages female education; provide incentives to families for girls to remain in school**
- **Guarantee equal access to quality education and training in all subjects and at all levels; provide preferential treatment or financial subsidies which would facilitate female access to male-dominated universities**
- **Promote more women teachers at secondary and university level, encouraging them to act as role models and mentors for female students**
- **Increase the salary scale and status of the overall teaching profession, from kindergarten to university, in recognition of the fact that education is a vital key to the quality of life**
- **Encourage women to select male-dominated occupations and desegregate the curricula; improve training in the sciences and mathematics, as well as in vocational, technical and business subjects, for girls and young women**
- **Provide convenient access to adult education for women, including child care facilities and night classes**
- **Develop adult legal, economic and political literacy programmes to augment basic literacy and numeracy**

- Introduce special measures to increase the proportion of women involved in economic decision-making
- Establish specific training programmes, especially for women living in extreme poverty, to improve their condition
- Expand the definition of "economically active" persons to include women performing productive but unpaid tasks in developing countries
- Establish guidelines for gender-disaggregated statistics so that women's work is clearly reflected
- Include women's paid and unpaid work in national accounts and economic statistics
- Guarantee equal employment opportunities; provide preferential treatment in the hiring of women until equal employment conditions are established
- Provide equal access to financial credit, family benefits and the right to participate in recreational, cultural and athletic activities
- Ensure that women with children have the right to work, to maternity leave and to other parental benefits
- Develop services to reduce women's child care and domestic workload, including incentives to employers to provide child-care facilities for working parents
- Establish flexible working hours and parental leave to encourage the sharing of child care and domestic work between parents
- Guarantee equal pay for work of comparable value; encourage total gender desegregation of the workplace
- Ensure adequate welfare services (e.g. social security, pension and unemployment benefits)

- Introduce special measures to increase the proportion of women involved in political decision-making
- Secure women's right to vote, stand for election and hold public or political office
- Encourage women fully to exercise the vote, independently, according to their own individual preference
- Campaign to promote women's issues on political platforms
- Generate support networks so that more women can campaign for public office, at the grass-roots, state, national, regional and international levels
- Maintain rosters of qualified women for positions in government, political parties and trade unions
- Collect statistical data and publicize women's participation in high-level decision-making bodies at the national, regional and international levels
- Promote qualified women to positions of power at every level within political, legislative and judicial bodies with the goal of achieving parity with men
- Encourage women in power to serve as mentors and otherwise support qualified women candidates in their career development
- Increase the number of women in leadership positions in public and private enterprise to at least 30 per cent by the year 2000, with a view to achieving future parity with men.

- Implement policies to prevent, control and reduce violence against women in the family, the workplace and society
- Make the elimination of domestic violence a national priority
- Institute comprehensive legislative reforms to protect women against domestic violence, sexual harassment and physical abuse in the home, the workplace and society, including strong deterrent and corrective measures
- Provide support services for female victims, including basic shelter, food and medical, legal and psychological assistance
- Provide employment support services to foster economic self-sufficiency among victims
- Institute training programmes for judiciary, health and social services personnel, as well as law enforcement officers, to ensure humane treatment of victims
- Promote legal literacy and peace education programmes in schools and in the media, underscoring women's plight as victims and women's potential as peacemakers
- Mount public awareness campaigns to curtail excessive violence and sex stereotyping in the media
- Revise educational curricula to shift the emphasis from war and violence to more peaceful aspects of civilization
- Establish a quota system to ensure the representation of women in delegations negotiating peace and disarmament at the decision-making level
- Promote the incorporation of women in peace education programmes in schools, conferences and publicity campaigns to underscore their potentially significant role in mediation and negotiation
- Support peaceful methods of conflict resolution through mediation and negotiation rather than aggression

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